

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL: AN INNOVATIVE CULTURE OF ENTERTAINMENT

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CASE DESCRIPTION

Cirque du Soleil (French for Circus of the Sun) has remained one of the most successful theatrical producers in the history of the entertainment industry. It is a hybrid of circus, acrobatics, and dance performance. Today, the organization has blossomed to 5,000 employees, 1,300 are artists, on five continents. The case is how Cirque du Soleil manages organizational culture and teamwork in a challenging entertainment industry.

It is intended for class study and the application of concepts learned in the classroom and designed to complement knowledge derived from concepts in organizational culture and teamwork.

CASE SYNOPSIS

Despite early financial hardships, Cirque du Soleil (French for Circus of the Sun) has remained one of the most successful theatrical producers in the history of the entertainment industry. What started as a troupe of street performers in Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec, Canada named Les Échassiers de Baie-Saint-Paul (French for the Wading Birds of Baie-Saint-Paul) has grown into a global entertainment business whose performances have been seen by over 100 million spectators in nearly 300 cities worldwide (Cirque du Soleil, 2013; Hoovers, 2013).

Cirque du Soleil is a hybrid of circus, acrobatics, and dance performance (Berry, Shankar, Parish, Cadwallader, & Dotzel, 2006). It is a multi-level production without the menagerie of exotic animals, yet is one that captures the magnificence of the human form, agility, and creativity. The performers toured the Canadian province of Quebec in the 1980s as a performing theatre troupe. Les Échassiers encountered financial setbacks that were relieved in 1983 when the government of Quebec extended a grant to the troupe as part of its 450th anniversary celebrations of Jacques Cartier's discovery of Canada (Biography.com, 2013). In less than 30 years, the company had over 5,000 employees worldwide, including more than 1,000 artists, and redefined the circus industry (Hoovers, 2013). The company integrated street entertainment, eccentric costumes, and cabaret with its worldly performers and artistic shows, winning the hearts of millions of spectators worldwide.

While Daniel Gautier was the financial and production manager, Laliberté was responsible for all creative elements of productions and performances. Initially, Cirque employed only 73 people, yet by 2001, that number had grown to 2,100 employees worldwide, 500 of whom were performers (Hoovers, 2013). Between 1984 and 1989, Cirque performed only one show at a time. Today, the organization has blossomed to 5,000 employees, 1,300 are artists, on five continents (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). The productions are divided into groups designated as Resident and Touring. Resident indicates occupancy of one location, whereas Touring indicates visiting different cities. Cirque had eight Resident locations in Las Vegas and one in Orlando, Florida. The ten Touring productions can be found across five continents. Of these, five are under the Big Top and five are in arenas (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). The International Headquarters in Montreal is home to 2,000 employees, administration offices, creative laboratories, artisans, and expert performers.

As the company traveled across the U.S. and Europe, the success of the organization grew, but not without managerial and organizational disputes, including “artistic rebellions” and partnership clashes (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002). Furthermore, given that no global entertainment competitor is on par with Cirque du Soleil, the company has to make strategic decisions as it embarks on its third decade in business.

Cirque management was aware of the fact that while their high-end market disruption strategy, which shifted their competitive focus from head-to-head competition to the creation of a brand new entertainment industry. Cirque was also aware that this new market creation strategy might generate new players who may possibly compete for same scarce resources in the future and present new challenges.

Given that no global entertainment competitor has ever been on par with Cirque du Soleil, the company must make strategic decisions as it embarks on its third decade in business. Pivotal questions were:

“How can Cirque maintain its high creative standards and expand its appeal to a larger audience?” And “How does Cirque stay loyal to its original values while continuing to move forward?”

Since everyone will be shooting at Cirque, leadership needed to pro-actively respond to possible future threats from competitors in order to preserve its success.

Keywords: Cirque du Soleil, Cirque, Les Échassiers de Baie-Saint-Paul, Organizational culture, Teamwork, Norms, Values, and Entertainment Organization.

ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE

As a major player in the performing arts industry, there really was no “clowning around” when circus entertainment was discussed in terms of Cirque du Soleil. While the

arts, entertainment, and recreation sector as an industry had several subcategories, performing arts companies were specific to *live* productions that comprised a diverse set of performers including creative artists, actors, singers, dancers, and musical groups. In terms of demands tied to consumer spending, this industry differed from associated industries such as motion pictures, theater and dance companies, orchestra and music production and distribution. The industries that were competing for the consumer's discretionary spending included stage companies (operas and symphonies), movie theaters, museums (art galleries and institutes), zoos (botanical gardens), and parks (amusement and recreation) (Hoovers, 2013).

The consumers' money and time were spread across a number of entertainment choices. Yet for live entertainment and specifically for circus venues, the primary competitors were movies, television, sports (spectator and active) and, to some degree, hobbies and personal interests. Further, because consumers varied by demographic capacity (age, income, and education), cash flow became a matter of uneven and seasonal primacy, highly patterned by attendance fluctuations. Thus, given the competitive landscape, other than admission fees, the performing arts industry was motivated to obtain auxiliary revenues from indirect sources such as contract and residual fees, licensing agreements, royalty fees, and in some cases private contributions (by the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers) or government grants (National Endowment for the Arts) (Hoovers, 2013). As a circus organization, Cirque du Soleil found its niche in the performing arts industry. Since the economic recession in the late 2000s, this niche experienced a four to five percent growth pattern per year (Hoovers, 2013). Thus, forecasts indicated annual growth even though the industry defines its operating season generally between September and May.

As an entertainment vehicle, Cirque's nearest competitors included the Shubert Organization, Feld Entertainment, and Live Nation Entertainment (ticket seller and promoter of live entertainment). In comparison, Live Nation Entertainment's annual sales far exceeded that of Cirque, Shubert, and Feld combined (see Figure 1).

While Cirque's 2013 annual sales equated to a sturdy \$239.02 million, this extent is marginal to that of Live Nation with \$5.38 billion in 2013 sales (Hoovers, 2013). Nevertheless, from resident shows to touring shows, the products and operations Cirque created developed into a rich and engaging history, whereby resources, talents, teamwork, culture, and innovative actions were optimized.

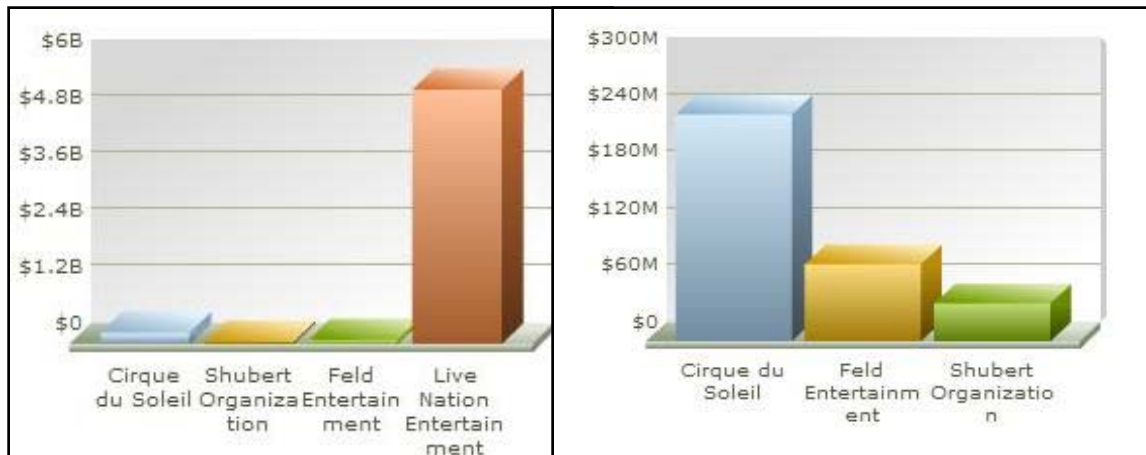


Figure 1: 2013 Annual Sales by nearest competitors (Hoovers, 2013).

	Cirque du Soleil	Shubert Organization	Feld Entertainment	Live Nation Entertainment
Annual Sales	\$239.02M	\$39.90M	\$81.20M	\$5.38B

Source: Hoover’s Inc. (2013) Cirque du Soleil

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL: AN UNPRETENTIOUS BEGINNING

Steam calliopes, horse drawn wagons, exotic animals, elephants, troupes, and clowns paraded into town. Each of these built excitement and anticipation leading to the Big Top where the ringmaster skillfully bellowed “Ladies and Gentlemen, Children of all Ages. Welcome to the Greatest Show on Earth! The circus is about to begin!” Indeed, the circus has been a delight for many generations. Lifelong circus lover Ernest Hemingway claimed, “The circus is the only ageless delight that you can buy for money. Everything else is supposed to be bad for you. But the circus is good for you. It’s the only spectacle I know that, while you watch it, gives the quality of a truly happy dream” (History Magazine, 2001, para. 2).

For more than 200 years, Europe and the Americas have had a passion for the circus. As a spectacle, the circus was much more than vaudeville, medicine, minstrel, or variety shows; it was a menagerie of entertainment including elements of theater, ballet, music, opera, and art. The forum was associated with specific skills and talents, including acrobatics, juggling, trapezes, trampolines, tightropes, stilt-walking, silk aerials, diavolo dance, and singing. To become stage ready, performers were dedicated, committed, manually dexterous, practiced, and acrobatic—with a pinch of daring.

For Cirque du Soleil, however, gone were the whimsical days of popcorn, peanuts, sawdust, spangles, and calliopes. Instead, Cirque (simply titled) was a hybrid of circus, acrobatics, and dance performance (Berry, et al, 2006). This “Circus of the Sun” was a multi-level production without the menagerie of exotic animals, yet was one that captured

the magnificence of the human form, agility, and creativity. Filed under the Art, Entertainment, and Recreation Sector, Cirque was a unique and innovative business with a humble beginning (Hoovers, 2013). Resembling many who wished to run away with the circus, young and creative Canadian street performer Guy Laliberté had a dream to reinvent the circus as an art form with artistic disciplines. This dream was encapsulated in the company's mission statement: "to invoke the imagination, provoke the senses, and evoke the emotions of people around the world" (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta – Company Manager for Zarkana May 30, 2013).

As a musician (accordianist), agile stilt-walker, and daring fire-breather, Laliberté belonged to *Le Club des Talons Hauts* (The High-Heels Club), a group of street performers in the picturesque village of Fête foraine de Baie-Saint-Paul near the St. Lawrence River just outside Quebec City (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002). Joined by co-performer Daniel Gautier, 25-year-old Laliberté founded Cirque du Soleil in 1984. As an imaginative innovator, Laliberté envisioned combining the entertainment culture of the circus with the artistry of acrobatic performance. This made such a combination the hallmark of all Cirque du Soleil's performances.

Inspired by the national fervor at the 450th anniversary celebration of the founding of Canada by French navigator and explorer Jacques Cartier, Laliberté used his charismatic appeal to persuade festivities organizers that what the region needed to raise national pride and awareness was a provincial tour by his newly formed Cirque du Soleil. With a \$1.3 million Canadian government grant, the company toured the province, bringing recognition to Cirque's front door (Hoovers, 2013). The tour performers and production were such a success that the company began to create demand outside of Canada. The demand for more tours was so high that by 1992 Cirque no longer needed grants neither from the public nor from private sectors (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

While Daniel Gautier was the financial and production manager, Laliberté was responsible for all creative elements of productions and performances. Initially, Cirque employed only 73 people, yet by 2001, that number had risen to 2,100 employees worldwide, 500 of whom were performers (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). Between 1984 and 1989, Cirque performed only one show at a time. The organization then blossomed to 5,000 employees on five continents, of which 1,000 were artists (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). The productions were divided into groups designated as resident and touring. Resident indicated occupancy of one location, whereas touring indicated visiting different cities. Cirque had eight resident locations in Las Vegas and one in Orlando, Florida. The ten touring productions could be found across five continents. Of these, five were under the Big Top and five were in arenas. The International Headquarters in Montreal was home to 2,000 employees, administration offices, creative laboratories, artisans, and expert performers (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

With the company traveling across the U.S. and Europe, the success of the organization grew, but not without managerial and organizational disputes including "artistic rebellions" and partnership clashes (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002). In 1998,

with Cirque valued at \$800 million, Laliberté bought out Gautier percentage and retained full control of the organization until March 1, 2006, when at the age of 47 he resigned and was succeeded by Daniel Lamarre. Although in charge of operations at all levels, Lamarre, who joined the Cirque executive team in 2001, reported to Laliberté, who is titled as Founder and Guide (Hoovers, 2013).

While Laliberté began a new, bold, and visionary foundation to fight world poverty, he retained creative scope and influence over activities. Cirque saw itself as a global citizen and believed that it made the world a better place through its entertainment (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta – Company Manager for Zarkana May 30, 2013). In addition to entertainment, Laliberté also had a goal for the foundation ONE DROP: to provide safe and sustainable water to poverty-stricken areas. With conviction, Laliberté believed “life gives back what you have given and even the smallest gesture will make a difference” (Hoovers, 2013, para. 1). Such an ethos has perhaps been the substance for the many awards and recognitions Laliberté has received. From 1997 to 2007, Laliberté was honored with the following accolades:

- 2007 —Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award at the Quebec, Canada, and international levels.
- 2004 — The Order of Canada (the highest distinction from the Governor General of Canada).
- 2004 — Time Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.
- 2003 —The Condé Nast group as part of the Never Follow Program, a tribute to creators and innovators.
- 2001 — Great Montrealer by the Académie des Grands Montréalais.
- 1997 — The Ordre National du Québec (the highest distinction from the Government of Quebec) (Hoovers, 2013)

Evoking imagination that rendered the senses spellbound was a trademark of the Laliberté innovative spirit. The high quality of the performance and the fact that more than 100 categories of occupations made up the company’s employees and artists reflected the audacity, conviction, and creative pillars of the organization’s success. Coming a long way from its humble beginnings in 1984, Cirque claimed that more than 100 million people worldwide had experienced a Cirque show (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

PRODUCTS (SHOWS)

As of July 15, 2013, Cirque du Soleil has offered 20 shows worldwide and focused on nine resident shows and ten touring shows.

RESIDENT SHOWS

The company’s nine resident shows were:

CRISS ANGEL Believe (Luxor Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada)

This show was a partnership between Criss Angel (regarded as the top magician in the world) and *Cirque du Soleil*. Criss Angel was the most sought after illusionist and most watched magician in television history. He was awarded the “Magician of the Century” (*Cirque du Soleil*, 2013). At *CRISS ANGEL Believe*, Angel brought his arsenal of 40 spectacular, dangerous, exciting, and unbelievable illusions to the stage. Additionally, the show was filled with comedy.

CRISS ANGEL Believe and *Cirque du Soleil* took audiences on a haunting and mystifying journey inside the mind of Criss Angel that defied reality (Vegas.com, 2013a).

KÀ (MGM Grand, Las Vegas: Nevada)

KÀ was an unusual, heroic journey of love and conflict brought to the stage in a dynamic, theatrical landscape by 80 some artists from around the world. KÀ transcended time, place, and featured an array of diverse cultures and customs to depict the tale of imperial twins on an adventurous journey to fulfill their destinies. Along their way, the twins confronted characters and were faced with events representing the opposing forces of good and evil. While danger followed them at every turn of their journey, they received a magical talisman for protection just before their world came under attack and collapsed.

The KÀ production and performance proved to be a brilliant masterpiece with a powerful soundtrack that complimented the unusual yet innovative blend of acrobatic feats, Capoeira dance, puppetry, projections, and martial arts (*Cirque du Soleil*, 2013). The show has been seen by more than six million spectators since its opening in February 2005 (Fastlist.com, 2010).

La Nouba (Walt Disney World Resort-Downtown Disney, Orlando, Florida)

La Nouba described the meeting of two separated worlds: the fantastic world of the circus artists “the Cirques” (French for circus people), sporting bright, fluorescent colors, and the Urbains (French for urbanites), who wore dark, monochromatic outfits (*Cirque du Soleil*, 2013). At this show, the dreams and nightmares were brilliantly integrated when these worlds made contact. ‘*La Nouba*’ challenged its audience to uncover passions they thought they had lost. The show was intended for the entire family visiting Walt Disney World Resort. The show was to be considered a festive journey of imagination featuring amazing aerial acrobatics and gymnastic feats (*Cirque du Soleil*, 2013).

La Nouba had numerous acts, one of which featured balls, hoops, and clubs flying in unprecedented numbers at a very high speed that made it difficult for the eyes to process. The tight ropewalker (English for funambule in French) act highlighted remarkable balance and precision on a 90-foot (27-meters), half-inch-wide steel wire: a high-wire walker ascended to a height of 34 feet (10 meters) above the stage while his partner descended from the top of the theater (*Cirque du Soleil*, 2013). The Skipping Ropes act began with the Urbains (urbanites) performing rigid rhythms in monochromatic tones that paved the way to vibrant dance and acrobatics in a steady stream of solo. The show also featured a four-pendulum-like swing on two different levels that carried a team of perfectly synchronized aerialists 53 feet above the stage.

Michael Jackson ONE (Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, Nevada)

Following on the successful heels of Michael Jackson's IMMORTAL WORLD TOUR touring show, the resident version was introduced in July 2, 2013 and titled Michael Jackson: ONE (Rolling Stone Music, 2013). Master Teacher and Cirque consultant Stefan Haves said, "Technology nearly surpassed the artistry with seamless hologram projections and lasers that it becomes so immersive for the public that it has become a new generation [of entertainment]. The technology is . . . exponentially more incredible, an indication that via technology the future of the circus will be to the point of intoxication" (Personal Interview Stefan Haves 4 July 2013 Artistic Cirque du Soleil consultant and contractor).

ONE offered a fusion of musical montages and sonic experiences in the spirit, glitz, and glamor associated with a Michael Jackson production. The dramaturgical environment utilized Meyer Sound's cutting-edge Constellation System along with specially designed speakers located in the headrest of each seat. ONE rendered a genuine musical miscellany of medleys, tableaux, and mosaics channeled into vibrant and vividly choreographed entertainment (Rolling Stone Music, 2013).

The Beatles LOVE (The Mirage, Las Vegas, Nevada)

LOVE intended to celebrate the musical legacy of *The Beatles*. It explored the content of the songs in theatrical scenes that portrayed real and imaginary people and provided the audience with an unusual Beatles panoramic and musical experience.

The show was performed by 60 energetic international artists including aerial performances, extreme sports, and urban free-style dance (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). According to Dominic Champagne, who wrote the original concept and directed the show:

I wanted to create a Beatles experience rather than a Beatles story, taking the audience on an emotional journey rather than a chronological one, exploring the landscapes and experiences that have marked the group's history. (Cirque du Soleil, 2013, n. p.)

Mystère (Treasure Island, Las Vegas, Nevada)

Mystère (French for mystery) was Cirque du Soleil's high-energy classical show that combined the powerful athleticism, high-energy acrobatics, and the unimaginable that made it Cirque du Soleil's thriller flagship. The show provided the ultimate discovery of the mysterious life (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). See Figure 2 for selected acts from the "Mystère" show.



Figure 2: Selected Acts from Mystère in Las Vegas

Title: Moha-Samedi

Picture credit: Matt Beard

Costume credit: Dominique Lemieux

Source: Cirque du Soleil (The above images were used with permission.)

Title: Lizards

Picture credit: Richard Termine

Costume credit: Dominique Lemieux

“O” (Bellagio, Las Vegas, Nevada)

Labeled as “an aquatic masterpiece of surrealism and theatrical romance,” the “O” production was “inspired by the concept of infinity and by the pure form of the letter “O” (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). The title of this production is also a phonetic representation of the French word for water, the element embodied by this show (Play Bill Online, 2013). The show was an aquatic spectacular where performers rose mysteriously from below the surface of a 1.5 million foot tank, or dove out of sight, never to be seen again. The show was filled with synchronized swimming, acrobats, fire dancers, and elaborate stage effects coupled with live music (Play Bill Online, 2013). See Figure 3 for selected acts from the “O” show.



FIGURE 3: Selected Acts from “O” in Las Vegas

Title: Clowns

Picture credit: Julie Aucoin

Costume credit: Dominique Lemieux

Source: Cirque du Soleil. (The above images were used with permission.)

Title: The Zebra

Picture credit: Veronique Vial

Costume credit: Dominique Lemieux

Zarkana (ARIA Resort & Casino at City Center, Las Vegas, Nevada)

Before arriving in Las Vegas, Zarkana had a very successful track record at Radio City Music Hall in New York City, the Madrid Arena in Spain, and at the Kremlin State Palace Theatre in Moscow, Russia. Opening on November 22, 2013 at the ARIA Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, the show was a stunning acrobatic extravaganza that told a story of a magician named Zark who goes on a mission to find his love and regain his magical power. The journey took Zark to an abandoned theater where 70 international artists performed an unusual collection of acrobatic fantasy scenes (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Zumanity (New York-New York Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada)

Zumanity represented a sensual adult-themed side of Cirque du Soleil. It was a seductive cabaret-style production combined with a Cirque du Soleil twist. While it explored different perspectives of love, it contained explicit and provocative contents through dance and gymnastics (Vegas.com, 2013b). The show was intended for mature audiences of 18 years or older.

TOURING SHOWS

Cirque du Soleil’s eleven touring shows in alphabetical order were:

Alegria

Alegria was a touring show in Italy, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia. The themes of the show, whose name meant "jubilation" in Spanish, included power and power handling over times, the evolution from ancient monarchies to modern democracies, old age, and youth. In the show, kings' fools, minstrels, beggars, old aristocrats, and children made up the Alegria universe. However, only clowns were able to resist the passing of time and its social transformations (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Amaluna

Performed in Canada and the U.S., Amaluna was a show about a mysterious island governed by goddesses and guided by the cycles of the moon.

Their queen, Prospera, directs her daughter's coming-of-age ceremony in a rite that honors femininity, renewal, rebirth and balance, which marks the passing of these insights and values from one generation to the next. (Cirque du Soleil, 2013)

As a result of a storm caused by Prospera, a group of young men landed on the island, triggering a love story between Prospera's daughter and a brave young suitor that was put to the test. The couple experienced a variety of trials and had to overcome daunting setbacks before they achieved mutual trust, faith, and harmony (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Corteo

Performed in Germany, *Corteo*, which means "cortege" in Italian, was a joyous procession, a festive parade imagined by a clown. The show brought together the passion of the actor with the grace and power of the acrobat to plunge the audience into a theatrical world of fun, comedy, and spontaneity situated in a mysterious space between heaven and earth.

The clown pictured his own funeral taking-place in a carnival atmosphere, watched over by quietly caring angels. Juxtaposing the large with the small, the ridiculous with the tragic and the magic of perfection with the charm of imperfection, the show highlighted the strength and fragility of the clown, as well as his wisdom and kindness, to illustrate the humanity that is within each of us. The music, by turns lyrical and playful, carried *Corteo* through a timeless celebration in which illusion teased reality (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Dralion

Dralion was a US touring show and derived its name from two emblematic creatures: the dragon, symbolizing the East, and the lion, symbolizing the West. It integrated the 3000-year-old tradition of Chinese acrobatic arts with *Cirque du Soleil style*. *Dralion* was built on the teachings and inspiration of the Eastern philosophy and its long-standing quest for harmony between humans and nature (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

In *Dralion*, the four embodied elements that shape the human form were represented by their own evocative color, where air was blue, water was green, fire was

red, and earth was ochre. In the *Dralion's world*, cultures blended man and nature, made it one, and achieved balance (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Koozå

Koozå toured in the USA, United Kingdom, Spain, Belgium, and France. Koozå, whose name was inspired by the Sanskrit word "koza," meaning "box," "chest" or "treasure," told the story of a melancholy loner (the innocent) taking on a journey filled with strength, fragility, turmoil, laughter, and harmony in search of his place in the world (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). The show was also about human connection and the worlds of the good and bad. According to Kooza's writer and director David Shiner:

The tone is fun and funny, light and open. The show doesn't take itself too seriously, but it's very much about ideas, too. As it evolves, we are exploring concepts such as fear, identity, recognition, and power. (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Kooza combined acrobatic performance with the art of clowning. The show highlighted exotic and colorful acts and electrifying themes such as identity, recognition, fear, and power (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Michael Jackson Immortal World Tour

This World Tour traveled to the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Germany, Austria, Spain, Hungary, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Belgium, and Portugal. Intended for lifelong fans and those who were experiencing Michael's creativity and signature moves for the first time, the show highlighted the King of Pop's artistry and celebrated a legacy that continued to transcend generations (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

The Michael Jackson Immortal Tour unlocked the secrets of the pop king's inner world including his love of music and dance. Through the art of magic and the beauty of nature, Michael's fantastic, inspirational music and lyrics sent messages of peace, love, and unity to the world (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Ovo

Performed in Austria, this show was "a headlong rush into a colorful ecosystem teeming with life, where insects work, eat, crawl, flutter, play, fight, and look for love in a non-stop riot of energy and movement" (Cirque du Soleil, 2013, n. p.). A world of biodiversity and beauty, the insects' home was filled with action and quiet emotion. When a mysterious egg appeared in their bustling community, it was love at first sight. The insects were astonished and intensely curious about the unusual object that represented the puzzling, inexplicable nature of their lives (Cirque du Soleil, 2013). The show overflowed with contrasts of the hidden yet spectacular bug's world.

Quidam

Performed in the USA, the show told the story of a young girl, Zoé, whose parents were distant and apathetic; they totally ignored her and became bored with her. Seeking to fill the void in her life, she pursued the world of *Quidam, an imaginary world* where she met characters who encouraged her to free her soul (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Quidam meant “a nameless passer-by, a solitary figure lingering on a street corner, a person rushing past and swallowed by the crowd.” It could have been anyone in the crowd, someone in the silent audience. The show, as explained by the show director, was for all the "quidams" whom this show allowed to speak and finally emerge from anonymity (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Saltimbanco

This show toured in the USA, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Canada. Saltimbanco, an Italian word which literally meant “to jump on a bench,” explored “the urban experience in all its myriad forms: the people who live there, their idiosyncrasies and likenesses, families and groups, the hustle and bustle of the street and the towering heights of skyscrapers” (Cirque du Soleil, 2013, n. p.).

The Saltimbanco show was inspired by the urban lifestyle and the city’s colorful inhabitants. Diversity was a cause for hope in a setting filled with a spectacular, eclectic cast of characters who brought a fantasy world to an imaginary city (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Totem

Totem toured in the USA. Totem (which meant a natural object, phenomenon, or animated being) traced “the fascinating journey of the human species from its original amphibian state to its ultimate desire to fly” (Cirque du Soleil, 2013, n. p.). This journey was illustrated through acrobatic and visual scenes where cast members produced a vivid impression of a giant turtle through artistry and imagination. Juggling between science and legend, Totem explored the ties that connect man with his dreams and the infinite potential of other species (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

Varekai

Varekai, a word that meant “wherever” in the Romany language of the gypsies, toured Argentina, Chile, and Peru. The show was an acrobatic tribute to the nomadic soul. Varekai was an unusual world that existed deep in a forest at the summit of a volcano where otherworldly things were possible (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

The story was about a solitary young man who fell from the sky into the shadows of a magical forest populated by fantastic creatures. Through an unusual adventure, an inspired life was discovered (Cirque du Soleil, 2013).

THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE OF THE GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

When evaluating Cirque du Soleil's competition in the worldwide entertainment industry, the critic was hard-pressed to find a semblance of genuine competition. Due to Cirque's unique creations that appealed to an audience above and beyond that of traditional circuses (such as Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey), a tangible, competitive landscape was as surreal as the production itself.

Since its inception in 1984, Cirque experienced insurmountable, profitable growth and revenue in less than 30 years, a feat previously unknown in the circus arena. This success was attributed to the fact that Cirque did not compete with entertainers such as the Ringling Brothers circus business, but instead created its own market space (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). Cirque had clearly transformed beyond the typical and traditional straw and canvas circus.

Rather than focus on how it could outdo competition in the traditional circus tent, Cirque's strategy revolved around a production that included the excitement of a circus performance and the creative richness of the theater. "This strategy enticed a completely new audience of adult and sophisticated theatergoers, who were willing to pay a much higher price than that of a ticket to the traditional circus" (Kim & Mauborgne, 200, p.10). From its humble beginning as an act that included street performing hippies who did not need more than their circus-like talents, Cirque grew into an expensive extravaganza. Although the cost of admission was considered costly to some, the productions were very expensive to run. Despite the high cost of admission to its performances and its perception as an ultra-brand to the affluent, Cirque's corporate position has been to make it accessible to everybody. Further, Tony Ricotta, Zarkana's company manager stated, "I really wish there was a way to communicate that to the world. This is not just a circus for the rich; this is a circus for everybody" (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta – Company Manager for Zarkana May 30, 2013).

Cirque built a \$600 million a year entertainment domain that combined acrobatics, music, dance, comedy, and a storyline, all under a glamorized circus tent. Dedicated Cirque goers paid anywhere from \$45 - \$195 per ticket to see the distinctive and innovative shows (Palmeri, 2004). However, as in any industry, there was purported competition from the traditional circus, theater, dance, and music business sectors, as well as a smidgen of competitors that offered unique entertainment genres over the last few years. The inkling of competition may have caused the innovators at Cirque du Soleil to spend lavishly to stay ahead, with productions such as *KÀ*, an action-packed story about twins who are separated when their Far Eastern palace is attacked. The grandiose performance was staged at the MGM Hotel, Las Vegas, and the story was told in a unique manner. The plot was communicated without words and through the actions of very talented performers on a \$200 million stage. As in any successful business venture, imitators attempted to duplicate the company's success. The creative genius behind Cirque's competition included individuals who were associated with Cirque du Soleil in the past and ventured out to develop their own innovative enterprises (Palmeri, 2004).

Franco Dragone Entertainment Group

Competition from Cirque's own talented individuals surfaced over the last ten years with the launch of Dragone Entertainment Group. During the 1980s and 1990s, Franco Dragone became famous while he served as director at Cirque du Soleil. His creative energy led to Cirque's innovative shows such as *Mystère*, *Quidam*, *Saltimbanco*, *Alegria*, "O," and *La Nouba*. Eager to develop his own Entertainment Company and globally recognized as a creative genius, Franco founded the Franco Dragone Entertainment Group in 2000. Dragone served as President and Artistic Director, and similar to Cirque du Soleil, he created and produced shows that incorporated dance, special effects, music, and circus art (Franco Dragone Entertainment Group, 2013).

Dragone produced the \$110 million show *La Reve* at the Wynn Las Vegas Resort and was the mastermind behind the continued success of the Celine Dion show at Caesars Palace (Nelson, 2010). *Le Reve* portrayed an aquatic theme in a circular theater that seated 1,608 people around a pool that was 68.5 feet in diameter, placing the audience at a vantage point that made them feel as though they were a part of the show. The performers included gymnasts, synchronized swimmers, and aerialists who ascended from the water or descended from the ceiling, in addition to running through the aisles in the theater, giving the audience a thrill of a lifetime (Weatherford, 2013). Celine's *Colosseum* at Caesars Palace was portrayed as a high-end corporate superstar production with lavishness only seen in a Las Vegas production and was worth the price (Weatherford, 2013).

Dragone's vision for the company was to develop the most remarkable live entertainment shows in the world and he planned to accomplish this by opening one long-running spectacular show per year. Examples included *The House of Dancing Water*, which opened in September 2010 as a permanent show in the City of Dreams, Macau, China with a water theme and an oriental culture basis. A second example was *Kung Fu Panda Live*, an arena touring show based on Dream Works' *Kung Fu Panda* movie, which despite production delays, remained scheduled to open in 2013 (Franco Dragone Entertainment Group, 2013).

Cavalía, Inc.

Normand Latourelle, President and Artistic Director of Cavalía, was a Cirque du Soleil executive from 1985-1990. Latourelle left Cirque and founded Cavalía, Inc., a privately held company based in Montreal, Canada. In 2003, Latourelle created the unique production Cavalía; an extravaganza based on a mix of acrobatics with an equestrian theme, and toured the United States and Europe with the production. The success of the show, described as Latourelle's passion, reflected his dedication and imagination.

Latourelle was known for linking various styles of creativity, leading audiences to new and exciting entertainment heights. Since its 2003 inception, 3.5 million people have marveled at the production's relationship between horses and humans (Curry, 2012). Similar to the international flair of Cirque du Soleil, Cavalía's artists included acrobats, dancers, and riders from all over the world, as well as musicians and singers. The production cast 11 different breeds of over 50 majestic horses from France, Spain, Portugal,

Spain, the Netherlands, and the United States. Latourelle created a new show, *Cavalia Odysseo* in 2013, which held 105 very successful performances in Toronto. Additionally, the Latourelle production announced in September of 2013 that it was moving its 10-story big top to Monterey, Mexico (Perez, 2013).

Las Vegas Style Competition

Besides the competition generated from Cirque's own creative geniuses who ventured out on their own, Cirque's continued success in Las Vegas attracted competition from a new and evolving type of entertainment spurred by the Cirque brand. A review of a variety of productions in Las Vegas from stereotypical dance shows and illusionists to Broadway productions and top concert entertainment was a convincing tribute to the effect Cirque du Soleil had on the Las Vegas show setting (Nelson, 2010).

The classic dance show *Jubilee* has been showing at Bally's on the Las Vegas Strip for over 25 years and continues to be one of Las Vegas' most popular shows. The sophisticated topless revue with elaborate costumes featured over 100 dancing showgirls with acts ranging from singing and dancing to Cirque style contortion acts. While this traditional Las Vegas dance show provided a flavor of old showgirl performances, it adopted the Cirque brand with a splash of contortionists in the production. To compete with other shows on the Las Vegas strip, *Jubilee* provided a very tasteful and family friendly performance that did not include topless dancers (Leach, 2014).

The Broadway show *Jersey Boys* entertained audiences in New York for years and later opened at Paris Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. The musical featured singing and excellent acting by seasoned professional cast members and kept the sold-out audiences entertained for the duration of the show. The story is based on the Four Seasons singing group and its lead singer, Frankie Valli. Reviews of the show reflected it as one of Broadway's best entertainment productions (Roberston, 2006). Although it did not have the Cirque flair of acrobatics and contortionists, *Jersey Boys* was sophisticated entertainment, and drew audiences on par with those who patronized Cirque performances, thus giving Cirque legitimate competition.

In the area of magic, David Copperfield, the master of illusion, performed incredible magic tricks at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Copperfield's magic drew a very high level of awe from the audience. The typical box trick of slicing a woman in half is replaced with Copperfield locking himself in a shrinking box. Copperfield, a charismatic performer, smiled at the audience while moving his hands and feet as the box got so small the entire length of his body was reduced to a few inches. The box then slowly got bigger and Copperfield jumped onto the stage, incorporating his comical personality. As with Cirque, Copperfield's show included a high level of audience participation as he integrated random people from the audience into his illusions. Copperfield would do magic tricks right in front of audience members when he performed illusions while standing in the audience. For one illusion, he asked a woman to join him in the aisle on the side of the theater. He asked the woman to examine a piece of tissue paper before he rolled it into a ball and made it levitate and dance along his arm with the tap of a finger (Lamare, 2013).

The performance caused competition for Cirque because many theatregoers only attended one performance while in Las Vegas.

Richard Abowitz, a Las Vegas based entertainment reviewer, believed Cirque had competition throughout the strip because “Now even the non-Cirque shows have aerialists. Las Vegas is a spectacle. We are a bandwagon mentality. Cirque has become a brand-name of a generic you can get elsewhere in the city” (Nelson, 2010, para. 30).

Traditional Circus Entertainment: Feld Entertainment, Inc.,

Cirque du Soleil’s largest competitor in the traditional circus and entertainment industry was Feld Entertainment, Inc., based in Vienna, VA. Feld’s leading productions, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, visited 90 U.S. cities annually and had the unique distinction of being the only shows in the entertainment industry to run for three consecutive centuries. Feld was a composite of circus, ice, stage, and motorsports that performed shows in over 70 countries, on six continents, and was viewed by more than 30 million people per year.

Chair and CEO Kenneth Feld owned the company and managed the majority of its productions. His father, Irvin, began managing the circus in 1956, many years after Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus had its first performance in 1871. Feld maintained offices and production facilities throughout the world and employed over 3,000 people who worked on creative ideas to thrill and entertain international audiences. In addition to the mammoth Ringling Brothers Circus, Feld’s other popular shows included *Disney on Ice* and *Monster Jam*, both of which are Feld Motor Sports productions (Feld Entertainment, 2013).

Other Traditional Entertainment Competition:

Live Nation, Inc., a Beverly Hills, California promotion company that controlled concert promotions and ticketing services as well as the management of performers, was considered Cirque’s second largest competitor in the traditional entertainment arena. Different from Cirque du Soleil’s focus as an entertainer, Live Nation’s strategy revolved around promoting a number of genres in the music industry. Its investments included the acquisition of Hard Events, a Los Angeles company that held concerts and dance music celebrations throughout North America. Live Nation expanded in 2011 through a joint venture with Groupon, an online discount company that offered discounts to help Live Nation with its ticket sales to concerts and other entertainment events (Hoovers, 2013).

The Shubert Organization, a New York City, New York organization that achieved renowned success on the Great White Way. As Broadway’s largest theater operator, Shubert owned and/or managed close to 20 locations in New York City. These establishments included the famous Lyceum and Winter Garden theaters. In 2008, Shubert’s Longacre Theater underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation, which restored original plasterwork and architectural detail, expanded theatergoers’ amenities, and repaired and upgraded the neo-French classical exterior façade. Expanding beyond New

York City, the Shubert Organization also owned the Shubert Theater in Boston and the Forrest Theater in Philadelphia, and managed the National Theater in Washington, DC. The Shubert Organization orchestrated and presented renowned productions such as *Cats*, *A Chorus Line*, *Miss Saigon*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Spamalot*. In addition to the productions themselves, its Telecharge.com served as the primary ticketing agency for New York Theater events (Hoovers, 2013).

The organization had one Off-Broadway location known as The Little Shubert and all other New York sites were Broadway theaters. As America's oldest professional theater company, The Shubert Organization was founded in 1900 by three brothers- Sam, Lee, and Jacob J. Shubert, who moved from Syracuse, New York to New York City and obtained a lease on the Herald Square Theater. Thus began the road to success on the Great White Way (Hoovers, 2014).

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, NORMS, AND VALUES

Having entertained thousands on nearly every continent, Cirque maintained its touring and resident venues, each of which was tied to the organization's intrinsic and sustainable culture. Fantastic myths and mind-altering states of imagination came to life in graceful, yet seemingly boneless body movements. The magnificence of colored delights, sights, and orchestrated stories was one of grandeur and opulence. Subtle yet deliberate emotions pervaded the imaginative scenes in a circus show where no animal other than human was engaged. In truth, there was no show like it. As previously discussed, imitators tried to copy this form of live entertainment, but there was no imitating the Cirque experience.

The Cirque culture relied upon strong communications and ethics to bridge any possible cultural differences, building trust between performers living and functioning in close quarters (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002). Indeed, Ricotta said that as an organization Cirque was "always sensitive" to such relationships. Further, the culture at Cirque was very open and accepting of people and to doing things in different ways. "No is not a word . . . and impossible is not a word at Cirque du Soleil" (Brigitte Belanger-Warner publicist for "O," 2008, n. p.).

With that being said, Ricotta asserted, "you can invite problems or you can offer solutions" (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta – Company Manager for Zarkana May 30, 2013). Behavioral norms and values resulted in the fulfillment and affirmation of the Cirque family, or at the very least, the creation of a community.

In fact, Ricotta recounted from Cirque's beginnings "those values [that] were created when we first began this company were such strong emotional values that they're almost impossible to erase and we wouldn't want to change them necessarily, but there is no dipping in the values when you become part of the company. You just know that they are there and people make you fully aware. Further, they are not posted on the wall but somehow they get to you. At the heart of it all, Cirque sees itself as a global citizen. And it is doing its job for a purpose. I know it's going to sound trite, but it's to make the world

a better place, and we do that through entertainment” (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta, May 30, 2013).

Of the 30 shows produced throughout its history, Cirque had as many as 19 extravaganza shows running concurrently in major cities worldwide. While permanent stages were rooted in the United States (Las Vegas, Nevada, and Orlando, Florida), Montreal, Canada remained the location for corporate offices, living, training, and performing facilities. From this location and from its founder, Laliberté, the organizational structure and leadership were promulgated to all venues. Laliberté’s ingenuity and management philosophy were based on his knowledge and experience with the performer’s eccentric and capricious characteristics (physiognomies). In his leadership capacity, Laliberté was both paternalistic and protective of his performers’ creative outlets and comfort levels. This management philosophy served to establish Cirque’s organizational norms and values. Thus, protection of a disparate and diverse band of performers resulted in the motivation of said performers to excel in a one-of-a-kind form of entertainment (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002).

Notwithstanding, as the benevolent caretaker, Laliberté tended to and anticipated the needs of the Cirque troupes. For Laliberté, above all, each performer must be “happy” for the benefit of the production as a whole. Such organizational norms and values served to create the culture of family and teamwork. For instance, the organization understood human companionship when talent was obtained from remote locations such as small villages in Africa, China, and South America. Cirque’s practice was to request at least two friends or family members to accompany the performer to help ease the challenging cultural transition due to changes in language and environment. When necessary, family units were kept intact, especially those rescued from dire circumstances. Language courses and educational opportunities were provided for both performers and their children. Troupe parties were also commonplace in the Cirque culture and celebrated diversity. Medical care, transportation assistance, and living facilities were standard benefits for Cirque performers. This was provided to the diverse and exotic breadth of ethnicities working interdependently in an otherwise international communal environment (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002).

Speaking more than 25 different languages and dialects, artists and performers originated from more than 40 countries. As an organization, Cirque was home to 4,000 employees, 500 of whom were performers (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2002). Thus, given the diversity of merging cultures, communications among recruits and personnel was indeed challenging but certainly not impossible. Add to the mix the complexities of living arrangements and the constant adaptation required on a daily basis, one could easily imagine the critical trust requirements needed when performing highflying stunts with precarious drops and turns.

Cirque du Soleil established a philanthropic organization within the company to positively affect the lives of at risk youth through circus arts. The organization was not only for discovering talented youth and for putting them on stage; it was meant to provide them with a creative outlet and a form of shelter from life’s challenges. Cirque, a company with a cause, wanted to make an impression on at risk youth. Its cause was to “try to make

the world aware that too many people on this planet don't have access to clean drinking water, for example. And as *citizens of the world* - it's our responsibility to do something about that. In our work, we practice that by showing joy, showing love, showing hardship, showing pain...and somehow getting people involved" (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta, May 30, 2013).

TEAMWORK: A KEY SUCCESS FACTOR

Each Cirque production required a team of specialized individuals with particular talents, skills, and aptitudes. Productions began on a storyboard with narrative development and design as collaboration between gymnastic choreographers, music writers, composers, engineers, set developers, structural erectors and many more design specialists. Once developed operations became functional, auxiliary services such as catering, communications, medical services, business operations, marketing and human relations were secured.

The enormous number of talented individuals working in a team format required interdependence and group performance so that everyone could "play together." This required a concept known as *task interdependence*, a model developed by James D. Thompson to identify task characteristics and effective distribution of outcomes or rewards among group members. Thus, the extent to which individuals performed was directly affected by what each group member did (Thompson, 1967). The degree and intensity of actions and tasks increased among group members when interdependence across group boundaries increased. Such actions required risks to be taken both in terms of talent and in terms of circumstance. To capitalize on the ingenuity of Cirque's innovative ideas, each designer, artist, performer, and choreographer had to take certain risks.

However, regardless of risk, each employee took great pride in and had affection for the company. This was mainly because employees were contributing in some way, shape, or form to making people happy and affecting the world in a positive way as outlined by Cirque's mission statement. Ricotta speculated that if a poll were taken of Cirque's employees, they could readily give you the three key words in the mission statement: *evoke, invoke, and provoke*. Ricotta attested that he had worked for other companies and yet, "I couldn't tell you what the mission statement was let alone be able to recite it" (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta, May 30, 2013). This indicated the strength of Cirque's values and its mission statement and the belief in it by each employee.

Teams were important to Cirque, simply because theater jobs in most companies were all collaborative. No one person can keep all those balls in the air and do it well, and so it had to be done by teams. However, the greatest competitive advantage that the company had was the diversity of its teams. Tony Ricotta validated that:

If everybody is from the same side of the river, you are only going to look at it one way and you can't appeal to everybody if you are only looking at it from a very narrow field of vision. So when everything is made up of teams, whether it's the production team, the operations team, or the artistic team, they all come from all

over the place. So, there is a varied perspective and that is what gives us a competitive advantage. When we started, it was very French Canadian, people said “Oh great we haven’t seen anything like that before.” But now we have the ability to reach beyond our headquarters and bring in new creators around the globe and give them an opportunity to create in a way that they never had been able to before and do some amazing things. (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta, May 30, 2013)

Change as a product of daily performance outcomes was usually seamless when one accounted for the nearly 30 million spectators who to date have attended Cirque performances (Hoovers, 2013). While the individual show may have differed from venue to venue, change was something Cirque cared to avoid for the sake of consistency. The product being produced had to be sustained for the sake of the audience. As Casting Partner Stefan Haves indicated, Cirque did not say “no” to things and this was necessary for the culture. “Basically, they ask themselves how much more wonderful can we make this?”(Personal Interview with Stefan Haves 4 July 2013). Cirque’s philosophy was if it could sustain the performers’ “happiness” then the audience/spectator would no doubt experience an emotionally driven, memorable, and glitzy performance.

FORESEEABLE CHALLENGES

While Cirque consistently invested in education and training, its prime challenge was finding ways to work with people from diverse global cultures. In fact, some operational issues were not necessarily related to cultural behaviors, but rather were merely people issues. For example, if an employee did not wish to comply with organizational infrastructure rules and practices such as timeliness, then immediate management intervention were required as a precautionary measure.

In addition, as a *global citizen*, Cirque performed throughout the world in countries that may not have protected basic human rights, but Cirque relied on the fact that its sole purpose was to make the world a better place through the incorporation of art and entertainment. Therefore, although not politically motivated or associated, the Cirque culture was endearing to the minds of their patrons because entertainment permitted individuals to think differently and thus helped cross a huge cultural gap.

From its infancy, it seemed that Cirque had a string of luck in success nearly and solely based on its leadership and ingenuity of artistic creation. While some shows and venues were neither profitable nor successful, the bulk of the organizational business model had been favorable even during economic downturns and the turbulent global financial crisis. Cirque’s leadership challenges were to develop entertainment for the next generation and to find a successor to Guy Laliberté given his age and foreseeable retirement.

Cirque du Soleil significantly disrupted the circus industry through its uncommon strategy of integrating many of the shows or the numbers familiar in Broadway like theatres rather than in traditional circuses to stay in a blue ocean away from competitors. Doing

so, Cirque generated new market growth that resulted in higher profits than any other traditional circus (Carpenter & Sanders, 2009).

Cirque management was aware of the fact that while their high-end market disruption strategy, which shifted their competitive focus from head-to-head competition to the creation of a brand new entertainment industry; they were also aware that this new market creation strategy might generate new players who may possibly compete for same scarce resources in the future and present new challenges.

Cirque affirmed its desire to sustain its artistic and entertainment work, yet realized that internal behaviors needed to change. Tony Ricotta admitted that Cirque was “rethinking that [challenge] and how we are going to turn the corner on this century” (Personal Interview Tony Ricotta – Company Manager for Zarkana May 30, 2013).

In terms of entertainment and that which attracted people to the Cirque model, it was clear that this company did not want to be a footnote of global entertainment, but rather a leader where human talent and flair could be showcased. Demonstrating what makes people tick was one key element of leadership, yet not giving up on its mission to make the world a better place was even more of a priority, making Cirque a creative diamond in the rough.

SUSTAINING THE ROLE

Cirque du Soleil can easily be described in terms of well-developed cultivation: it demonstrates the preparation of a performance group to promote their own growth, develop training, culture, sophistication, and collective acculturation. Laliberté’s leadership style was unique and included patterns of behavior that nurtured the building of norms and values of a cognitive performance culture. Laliberté’s innovative style and creativity made him a talent harvester and cultivator of people, committed to building individual talent levels while maintaining a stewardship for the individual’s physical and emotional welfare. The strategy he developed will surely be applied to future productions.

Given that no global entertainment competitor has ever been on par with Cirque du Soleil, the company must make strategic decisions as it embarks on its third decade in business. Pivotal questions were:

“How can Cirque maintain its high creative standards and expand its appeal to a larger audience?” And “How does Cirque stay loyal to its original values while continuing to move forward?”

Since critics will be shooting at Cirque, leadership needed to pro-actively respond to possible future threats from competitors in order to preserve its success.

ENDNOTE

The authors developed the case for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation. The case is based on secondary (i.e. published) data. All rights are reserved to the authors. The authors extend their appreciation to Tony Ricotta, Company Manager for Zarkana; Ann Paladie, Senior Publicist; Pauline Fretté, of Cirque du Soleil's department of Global Citizenship; and Cirque's artistic consultant Stefan Haves for their assistance, advice, input, and feedback to the contents of this case. Contact person: Issam Ghazzawi, University of La Verne, 190 Third Avenue, La Verne, CA 91750.

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